



NCVO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Good employment practice case study

Collaboration on HR: London Housing Foundation and Broadway

The London Housing Foundation is a charitable foundation that specialises in providing support to voluntary organisations tackling single homelessness in London. It does this by providing grants and through its Impact programme – a series of commissioned support for personal and organisational development.

Broadway is one of London's leading voluntary organisations tackling homelessness, providing a wide range of services from street to home. They have a track record of working with and encouraging other agencies that support homeless people to push forward the barriers of good practice.

Project

This two year pilot project arose from a London Housing Foundation's action learning set involving the heads of small agencies tackling single homelessness in London. A major issue for the agency heads was the difficulty of achieving high standards of HR practice without professional HR expertise. Having considered a number of models to address those needs, the Foundation felt that suitable professional expertise existed within the larger voluntary organisations working in the homelessness sector.

Following a tendering process, Broadway was appointed. Importantly for this initiative, they have a highly regarded, award winning HR team.

Staff from Broadway and the London Housing Foundation spent considerable time on the detail of how to implement the pilot programme, working closely with the agencies from the action learning set. Participating agencies are receiving support from Broadway through:

- an audit of their current HR situation and needs; the development of core policies, procedures and competencies adapted for each agency;
- training in relation to the above and other areas; regular HR surgeries;
- a helpline with dedicated support;
- guaranteed updating and support following any change in legislation or accepted good practice;
- a nominated account manager for each participating agency.

An important element is that the participating agencies pay for the service, albeit at a subsidised rate of around 50%.

Benefits and challenges

As well as providing the necessary professional HR support to the smaller agencies, the project allows those smaller agencies to tap the creativity of a larger voluntary organisation working to tackle the same problems of homelessness. It also provides a useful opportunity for the larger organisation to strengthen its own organisational capacity through an element of social enterprise.

A benefit of the agencies paying for the service underlines that the agencies will be receiving a service as customers, establishing appropriate programme delivery from the outset. The agencies will also become accustomed to keeping a budget line for HR. The need to subsidise this service should also diminish. Although it is anticipated that considerable work will be needed during the length of the pilot to raise the HR standards in the participating agencies, once that initial process is completed the agencies will be able to maintain that standard at a similar budget allocation.

Future development

The project started on 1 April 2006 with eleven agencies involved. The Foundation has appointed consultants to undertake a contemporaneous evaluation of the two-year project so that lessons can be learnt for replication. The Foundation proposes to disseminate this learning through its Impact programme – not only to homeless agencies but also to the wider voluntary sector.